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MEASURES TO ELIMINATE
INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
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Letter dated 26 January 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letters dated 11 December 1998 (A/53/740-S/1998/1161) and 8 January 1999 (A/53/785-S/1999/23) from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, and the letter dated 4 January 1999 (A/53/777-S/1999/6) from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon, addressed to the Secretary-General.

The Government of Lebanon continues to be directly responsible for the volatile security situation along the Israeli-Lebanese border. The primary cause of this situation is Lebanon's unequivocal support for Hizbollah, an organization engaging in international terrorism, and its use of Lebanese territory for an elaborate military infrastructure, consisting of training camps, recruiting centres and storage areas for armaments. Most important, Lebanon has let itself become a launching pad for acts of aggression and outright terrorism against Israel, including indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israeli towns and villages.

Hizbollah is not an innocent political party or welfare organization serving part of the Lebanese public. Hizbollah has declaredly targeted and murdered hundreds of innocent civilians throughout the world. Moreover, Hizbollah's record throughout the 1980s, on seizing hostages from many countries, is a well-established fact, known throughout the international community. In the month of November 1998 alone, there were 93 terrorist attacks in southern Lebanon, the vast majority of which were carried out by Hizbollah. It should be emphasized that in addition to Hizbollah, a number of Lebanese and Palestinian terrorist organizations have been given free rein to attack Israel from Lebanese territory. This fact does not prevent Lebanon from complaining before the international community about a situation that is indisputably its own creation.

Israel has repeatedly stated its willingness to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in its entirety. The resolution did not only call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the Lebanese Government's effective authority in the area. Lebanon's continued readiness to allow terrorist operations from its soil is totally incompatible with these last two provisions of the resolution. Israel reiterates again its willingness to implement resolution 425 (1978) and calls upon the Government of Lebanon to cooperate with Israel in order to restore peace and security along their common border.

The Government of Lebanon has failed so far to respond to Israel's proposals, and therefore it alone bears the burden for the continuing status quo and its inevitable consequences. Indeed, Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss reiterated Lebanon's refusal to take up Israel's offer in an interview published on 12 January: "We are not prepared for any talks or negotiations nor security arrangements with Israel" (Xinua News Agency, from the Daily Star). Lebanese President Emile Lahoud demonstrated precisely the same position, in refusing Israel any special assurances for protecting the international border after the completion of an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. "We refuse guarantees and arrangements for withdrawal which will be what Israel wants at our expense" (Lebanese television, 24 November 1998). This amounts to a complete rejection of the essence of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

International law prohibits Lebanon from sanctioning and encouraging terror, under any guise. By refusing to disarm Hizbollah and other terrorist organizations, the Lebanese Government has shown itself unwilling to abide by its international obligations to prevent activities within its territory directed towards organizing, instigating, assisting and participating in acts of violence and terror across Israel's northern border. Such obligations are part and parcel of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970). It should be understood, then, that Israel reserves the right to take whatever measures may be necessary to assure its own self-defence, in accordance with international norms and the Charter of the United Nations.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative